

Article

Research Gap in Personal Branding: Understanding and Quantifying Personal Branding by Developing a Standardized Framework for Personal Brand Equity Measurement

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Abstract: Personal Branding (PB) has gained significant attention in recent years, especially in career advancement and business success. This study addresses the research gap in Personal Brand Equity (PBE) measurement by developing and validating a standardized framework. Using mixed-methods research combining interviews with 10 professionals and surveys of 396 individuals across diverse professional categories, the study identifies and validates three dimensions of PBE: Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition. Factor analysis revealed six critical attributes influencing PBE (visibility, credibility, differentiation, online presence, professional network, and reputation) and distinguished between external- and self-Personal Brand Equity components. Data were analyzed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (EFA and CFA), with reliability assessed through Cronbach's alpha (>0.7). Findings demonstrate significant correlations between high PBE scores and positive career outcomes including job satisfaction, salary progression, and advancement opportunities. The resulting Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) provides both a measurement tool for professionals seeking to enhance their personal brands and a validated framework for future academic research on personal branding effectiveness.

Keywords: Personal Branding; Personal Brand Equity; career development; measurement framework; strategic branding



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1. Introduction

In today's competitive job market, individuals are increasingly tasked with promoting their own value, resulting in the growing importance of Personal Branding. Personal Branding (PB) is a strategic process through which individuals position themselves to stand out and achieve career advancement and business success (Shepherd, 2005). To stand out in the digital age, Personal Branding is a crucial tool, especially in a rapidly expanding marketplace where reputation, visibility, and credibility are paramount for professional success. As Peters (1997) emphasized, "everyone is a CEO of their own company", which reflects the shift in responsibility from organizations to individuals regarding personal success.

It has long been recognized that brands, as well as any person, could have a personality (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Loureiro et al., 2014). Personal Branding sits at the intersection of multiple disciplines, including marketing, management, psychology, sociology, and organizational behavior (Lair et al., 2005; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). This interdisciplinary nature highlights the complexity of PB and necessitates a more nuanced understanding of its constructs. Notably, technological advancements and the rise of social media have made it increasingly essential for professionals to actively engage in Personal Branding as part of their career development (Gioia et al., 2014). The increasing accessibility of online platforms and networking tools has not only expanded individuals' reach but also emphasized the importance of self-presentation and strategic branding in the virtual space (Goffman, 1956; Khedher, 2014).

1.1. Research Gap

Despite the growing attention Personal Branding (PB) has received in both academic and professional contexts, significant gaps remain in its conceptualization and measurement. While studies have recognized PB's importance in achieving career success and personal differentiation (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Khedher, 2014), most studies have focused narrowly on specific demographic groups or professions—such as CEOs (Bendisch et al., 2013b), journalists (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017), or athletes (Lobpries et al., 2018)—rather than developing models applicable across diverse professional contexts. This lack of generalizability limits the applicability of current frameworks across broader demographic and professional contexts.

Furthermore, the measurement of Personal Brand Equity (PBE)—a critical component of Personal Branding—remains underdeveloped. Although prior work has introduced dimensions such as visibility, credibility, and differentiation, these constructs lack standardized tools for empirical validation (Gorbatov et al., 2020; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). Without a universally accepted model, it becomes challenging to evaluate how PB efforts translate into tangible career outcomes like job satisfaction, salary progression, or professional recognition. Previous investigations have either concentrated on context-specific topics without standardized scale development or have failed to differentiate PBE conceptually from established constructs within the self-presentation and career literature (Zinko & Rubin, 2015). This fragmentation has hindered the advancement of Personal Branding as a field and limited our understanding of how specific Personal Branding efforts translate into tangible career outcomes.

Another crucial challenge lies in the dynamic nature of Personal Branding in the digital age. Social media platforms and virtual networking have reshaped the mechanisms of self-presentation, yet their impact on PBE measurement has not been fully explored (Labrecque et al., 2011; Szántó, 2025). Existing models fail to account for the interplay between offline reputation and online persona, creating an incomplete understanding of how PB functions in modern professional ecosystems.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating insights from the interdisciplinary literature and proposing a novel, empirically validated framework for measuring PBE. This framework aims to bridge the gap between theoretical constructs and practical applications, making it relevant for diverse industries and professional levels. By doing so, this research not only contributes to the theoretical advancement of PB but also provides actionable tools for individuals and organizations seeking to optimize their branding strategies.

1.2. Objectives

This paper proposes a standardized framework to quantify PBE, enabling individuals to measure their marketability, credibility, and impact in a competitive professional land-

scape. This framework builds on the existing literature but introduces new dimensions of measurement that account for both self-perceived and externally perceived aspects of Personal Branding. Research (Han et al., 2021) indicates that a given target audience already perceives personal brands as independent brands. By integrating insights from marketing, career theory, and sociology (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004; Vallas & Cummins, 2015), this research aims to provide a comprehensive model that can be applied to diverse professional settings.

The present study explores the implications of Personal Branding on career success, including job satisfaction, salary progression, and professional recognition (Ng et al., 2005). As previous research has shown, Personal Branding is linked to improved career outcomes (Arthur et al., 2005), but a clearer understanding of how specific branding efforts translate into measurable success is still needed. By proposing a Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES), this paper contributes to the field by offering a new tool to quantify the strength and value of an individual's brand.

The primary objective of this paper is to create a standardized, measurable model for Personal Branding. This involves synthesizing existing definitions of Personal Branding and its related constructs, such as Personal Brand Equity (PBE), and identifying the key factors that influence these constructs. In doing so, this paper aims to propose a new framework for measuring Personal Branding that is applicable across various industries and professional contexts.

To achieve this, we will examine how key attributes such as visibility, credibility, differentiation, and online presence contribute to the development of PBE (Gorbatov et al., 2020; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). Additionally, we will explore the relationship between Personal Branding efforts and career success, offering both theoretical insights and practical applications for professionals seeking to enhance their personal brands. This research also aims to advance the academic understanding of Personal Branding by providing a framework that can be tested and refined in future studies.

By addressing the existing gaps in the literature, this paper offers both individuals and organizations new tools for evaluating and optimizing Personal Branding efforts. Ultimately, the goal is to provide actionable insights that can be used to improve career trajectories, enhance professional reputation, and foster long-term success in increasingly competitive industries (Bourdage et al., 2015; Vallas & Christin, 2018).

1.3. Article Structure

This article is structured to systematically address the identified research gap in Personal Branding measurement. Following this Introduction section, which establishes the importance of Personal Branding and outlines our research objectives, the Literature Review section provides a comprehensive analysis of Personal Branding's multidisciplinary nature, existing definitions of PB, theoretical foundations, and previous empirical research. The Materials and Methods section details our mixed-methods approach, including the Research Onion framework, qualitative interviews, and quantitative survey methodology. The Results section presents our findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases, highlighting the key attributes of effective Personal Branding and validating the proposed Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES). The Discussion section explores the theoretical implications of our findings for understanding Personal Branding in professional development and presents practical applications for individuals and organizations. The Future Research and Limitations section directly addresses the topic of the chapter's title. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes our contributions to the field and suggests new directions.

2. Literature Review

Personal Branding can be understood as the process through which individuals market themselves and their careers, positioning their unique value propositions in a competitive environment (Shepherd, 2005). The growing importance of PB in contemporary business settings is largely due to the increased emphasis on personal responsibility for career development and success (Gioia et al., 2014). In the digital age, individuals are expected to strategically manage their personal brands to achieve both career advancement and personal recognition (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Rahayu et al., 2024; Venciute et al., 2024). However, despite the increasing recognition of its importance, the field still lacks a standardized definition and universally accepted framework for measuring Personal Brand Equity (PBE) (Szántó, 2025).

2.1. Multidisciplinary Nature of Personal Branding

Personal Branding (PB) has evolved as a strategic tool for professional differentiation, drawing from various academic disciplines, including marketing, management, psychology, sociology, and organizational behavior (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Shepherd, 2005; Trang et al., 2024). The concept of PB aligns with traditional brand management principles (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993) but applies them to individuals, emphasizing visibility, differentiation, and credibility (Labrecque et al., 2011; Szántó & Radácsi, 2023). Recent studies reinforce the idea that in the digital economy, Personal Branding plays a pivotal role in career development, influencing hiring decisions, job satisfaction, and earning potential (Gandini, 2016; Kanasan & Rahman, 2024; Kucharska, 2024).

It is fair to state that the study of Personal Branding spans across multiple disciplines, thus the research gap is evident due to its multidisciplinary nature. From a **marketing** perspective, PB draws on the principles of traditional brand management but applies them to individuals. This perspective emphasizes the importance of visibility, differentiation, and emotional connection with one's audience, much like product branding (Aaker, 1997). For instance, Aaker's (1991) work on brand equity, originally focused on products, can be adapted to individuals, where Personal Brand Equity (PBE) reflects the added value created through strategic personal marketing efforts. Furthermore, from a marketing perspective, PB is linked to brand equity, where individuals manage their reputations similarly to corporate brands (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Park et al., 2020; Nutta et al., 2025; Petty, 2025). The increasing importance of digital platforms has led to the emergence of influencer branding, where professionals leverage their expertise for career growth (Booth & Matic, 2011; Khamis et al., 2016; Bansal & Saini, 2022; Trang et al., 2024).

Psychological theories, such as identity formation (Mead, 1934) and self-concept (Cohen, 1959), provide insights into how individuals construct and project their personal brands based on their self-perceptions and social identities. In this context, Personal Branding is not just about marketing oneself but also about identity development, as individuals strive to align their internal self-image with their external public persona (Szántó, 2025). Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical theory is particularly relevant here, as it suggests that individuals engage in impression management, actively shaping how they are perceived by others.

From a **sociological** standpoint, PB is deeply connected to the accumulation of social capital and network effects. Bourdieu's (1986) theories on social and cultural capital highlight how individuals use their social networks to enhance their status and credibility, a process that directly influences their Personal Brand Equity (PBE). In this framework, PB is seen as a strategic tool for increasing one's social capital, thereby enhancing one's reputation and career prospects (Vallas & Cummins, 2015).

When combining psychological and sociological standpoints, it can be concluded that PB aligns with self-concept theories, emphasizing self-presentation, identity construction, and impression management (Goffman, 1956; Mead, 1934). More recent studies suggest that PB contributes to career resilience and employability, especially in uncertain labor markets (Giotis, 2024; Hamann et al., 2023). Additionally, social capital theories highlight how PB strategies strengthen professional networks and enhance career mobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Szántó & Radácsi, 2023; Kucharska, 2024).

Despite these interdisciplinary approaches, the definitions of PB and PBE remain fragmented. While marketing scholars focus on visibility and differentiation, psychologists emphasize self-awareness and identity formation and sociologists explore the role of networks and social capital. As a result, there is no single, cohesive framework that captures the full scope of Personal Branding as a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Szántó, 2025).

2.2. Defining Personal Brand Equity

The lack of a standardized definition for Personal Branding is a key issue in the existing literature. The measurement of Personal Brand Equity (PBE) remains a key challenge in PB research. While earlier models focused on corporate brand equity (Aaker, 1997; Keller, 1993), scholars have attempted to adapt these frameworks to individuals (Gorbatov et al., 2020; Zinko et al., 2007; Ozcan & Hair, 2023; Kakitek, 2018). Several academics have explored different facets of PB, but few have offered a comprehensive model for measuring its impact. Gorbatov et al. (2018) introduced a three-dimensional framework for PBE, comprising **Brand Appeal**, **Brand Differentiation**, and **Brand Recognition**. This model is grounded in traditional brand equity frameworks but adapted to reflect the unique attributes of personal brands. This most widely recognized model proposes three key dimensions:

- **Brand Appeal** refers to how attractive or appealing an individual's brand is to their target audience, reflecting qualities such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and relevance (Khedher, 2014; Gorbatov et al., 2020).
- **Brand Differentiation** highlights the extent to which an individual stands out from their competitors based on unique skills, experiences, or characteristics (Aaker, 1997). This is crucial in a crowded job market, where differentiation can significantly influence career success (Loureiro et al., 2017; Szántó, 2025).
- **Brand Recognition** focuses on how well an individual's brand is known and recognized within their industry or professional network. High recognition often correlates with greater career opportunities and influence (Keller, 1993; Rampersad, 2009; Parmentier & Fischer, 2020).

While these dimensions provide a foundation, the recent literature argues that digital engagement, social proof, and audience perception should be integrated into PBE measurement models (Rahman et al., 2022; Husain et al., 2022; Khan, 2021). This research gap appears to be crucial, since the above-identified three dimensions are critical for understanding the strategic role of Personal Branding in professional development and are integral to the development of the Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES). This study addresses this gap by incorporating online and offline branding dimensions, plus incorporating self-PBE and external-PBE into an updated framework. The PBES aims to provide a standardized tool for measuring the strength and value of an individual's personal brand across various professional contexts (Szántó, 2025).

2.3. Theoretical Foundations of Personal Branding

The theoretical foundations of Personal Branding draw heavily from **brand management** theories. Keller (1993) and Aaker (1997) emphasized the importance of brand knowledge and consumer perceptions in building strong brand equity. In the context of PB, this translates into how individuals manage the perceptions of their target audiences—whether employers, clients, or colleagues—to build a favorable reputation. Personal Branding thus becomes a form of self-marketing where individuals must actively manage their image to maximize their perceived value. Applied to PB, these principles highlight the roles of differentiation and emotional connection in career success (Hughes et al., 2019).

Scholars have suggested that PB should be measured not only by external perceptions but also by internal self-assessments. Social Identity and Impression Management (Goffman, 1956; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) explains how individuals shape their identities through strategic self-presentation, particularly in professional settings (Lair et al., 2005; Gorbатов et al., 2020; van Reijmersdal et al., 2024). Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986) suggests that PB enhances career progression by strengthening professional networks and perceived credibility (Botella-Carrubi et al., 2018; Chen & Li, 2024). Szántó (2025) highlights the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation in Personal Branding efforts, suggesting that individuals who are more conscious of their strengths and weaknesses are better positioned to enhance their PBE.

In discussing the impact of personal branding on professional development, Almestarihi's (2024) insights into eco-friendly branding can be linked to how individuals present their non-quantifiable attributes, such as personal values and social responsibility, in their personal brand narratives.

In addition to brand management theories, **career theory** plays an important role in understanding PB. Arthur et al. (2005) introduced the competency-based view of careers, which outlines three key competencies: knowing why (motivation and identity), knowing how (skills and knowledge), and knowing whom (social networks and relationships). These competencies align closely with the dimensions of PBE, where Brand Appeal is linked to motivation and identity, Brand Differentiation to skills and knowledge, and Brand Recognition to social networks (Gorbатов et al., 2018).

Digital Personal Branding (Labrecque et al., 2011; Schlosser et al., 2017) highlights the growing influence of online platforms in shaping personal brand reputation and employability (Khamis et al., 2016; Khan, 2021; Al-hujri & Bhosle, 2025).

While these frameworks provide a solid foundation for understanding Personal Branding, they also reveal gaps in the literature. Notably, there is a lack of empirical research testing the validity of PBE as a measurable construct. Also, most studies remain conceptual or qualitative in nature, with few offering quantitative tools for assessing the impact of PB on career outcomes (Evans, 2017).

2.4. Empirical Research on Personal Branding

Empirical studies on PB are still relatively scarce, though some progress has been made in recent years. Research by Gorbатов et al. (2020) provided one of the first attempts to empirically validate the three-dimensional framework of PBE. Their study found that individuals with higher Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition were more likely to experience positive career outcomes, including higher job satisfaction, faster promotion rates, and increased salary potential. Recent studies have emphasized the tangible impact of PB on career outcomes. Empirical research confirms that strong PB strategies lead to increased hiring opportunities, salary advantages, and professional recognition (Gorbатов et al., 2020; Parmentier & Fischer, 2020). These findings underscore the strategic importance of PB in professional development (Ng et al., 2005; Gorbатов et al., 2020).

Similarly, [Fombrun and Van Riel \(2004\)](#) explored the relationship between corporate branding and career success, suggesting that personal branding efforts are closely tied to reputation management. They argue that individuals who actively manage their personal brands are better positioned to build trust and credibility with their professional networks, leading to greater career opportunities. This aligns with the findings of [Arthur et al. \(2005\)](#), who noted that career success is often predicated on an individual's ability to stand out and differentiate themselves in a competitive market. Furthermore, it is crucial for corporate brands to establish and develop emotional connections with consumers ([Loureiro et al., 2017](#)).

However, much of the existing research has focused on niche populations, such as CEOs ([Bendisch et al., 2013b](#)) or specific industries, leaving a gap relating to the generalizability of these findings. This study aims to address that gap by proposing a more standardized model for measuring PBE that can be applied across diverse professional contexts.

2.5. Personal Branding in the Digital Age

The digitalization of PB has transformed how individuals manage their professional identities. The rise of digital platforms has further complicated the dynamics of Personal Branding. Social media and online networking have expanded the reach of personal brands, allowing individuals to connect with wider audiences and build their reputations on a global scale ([Khedher, 2014](#)). Social media platforms have become critical tools for career positioning, allowing individuals to establish thought leadership and credibility ([Booth & Matic, 2011](#); [Loureiro, 2023](#)). However, this increased visibility also requires individuals to be more strategic in managing their online presence, as digital interactions play a significant role in shaping perceptions of their personal brands ([Labrecque et al., 2011](#)). Digital branding efforts—such as LinkedIn optimization and content creation—significantly enhance visibility and networking potential ([Ken, 2025](#); [Bubphapant & Brandão, 2024](#); [Rathi et al., 2024](#)).

Studies suggest that digital platforms can either enhance or undermine an individual's Personal Brand Equity, depending on how they are used ([McCorkle & McCorkle, 2012](#)). For example, LinkedIn has become crucial for professionals to showcase their skills, network, and increase visibility to potential employers. Recent research underscores the importance of digital storytelling, where consistent, authentic online narratives contribute to stronger Personal Brand Equity ([Brooks & Anumudu, 2016](#); [Khamis et al., 2016](#); [Jain et al., 2021](#); [Santer et al., 2023](#); [Avery & Greenwald, 2023](#)). However, managing a personal brand online requires a delicate balance between self-promotion and authenticity, as over-promotion can lead to negative perceptions ([Szántó, 2025](#)).

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a **mixed-methods approach** that integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the constructs of Personal Branding and develop a standardized framework for measuring Personal Brand Equity (PBE). The mixed-methods approach offers a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon, combining qualitative insights with quantitative generalizability. This methodology aligns with the **Research Onion** framework proposed by [Saunders et al. \(2019\)](#), which emphasizes the importance of using multiple research strategies to address complex research questions.

3.1. Research Framework Based on the Onion

The Research Onion framework, developed by [Saunders et al. \(2019\)](#), offers a structured and systematic approach to conducting research in the business and management disciplines. This framework is especially useful for organizing the methodology section of a

dissertation or thesis, as it methodically layers the research process to ensure thoroughness and consistency. The Research Onion leads researchers through key methodological decisions, starting from the broad philosophical stance and narrowing down to specific data collection and analysis techniques. Each layer encourages critical reflection and informed decision-making, which is crucial for upholding the research's integrity and validity.

This study adopts the **Research Onion** as a foundational framework to structure its methodological approach. Given the complexity of Personal Branding (PB) and Personal Brand Equity (PBE), a well-defined research design is essential to ensure both conceptual clarity and empirical robustness.

To explore the complexities of Personal Branding and Personal Brand Equity (PBE), the application of the Research Onion framework proves highly relevant as seen in Figure 1. Personal Branding, as a strategic process, and its influence on both individual and organizational success are dynamic and multifaceted areas that benefit greatly from a structured methodological approach. The systematic design of the framework enables a detailed examination of these constructs and their interconnections through a range of philosophical and methodological perspectives. Employing the Research Onion ensures that selected methods, such as literature reviews, interviews, and surveys, are well-aligned with the research objectives and interlinked, with each phase building upon and refining the previous one. This cohesive integration is essential for achieving a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Personal Branding and its elements on different stakeholders. The Research Onion not only supports a disciplined methodological approach but also enhances the analytical depth and substantive rigor of research in Personal Branding.

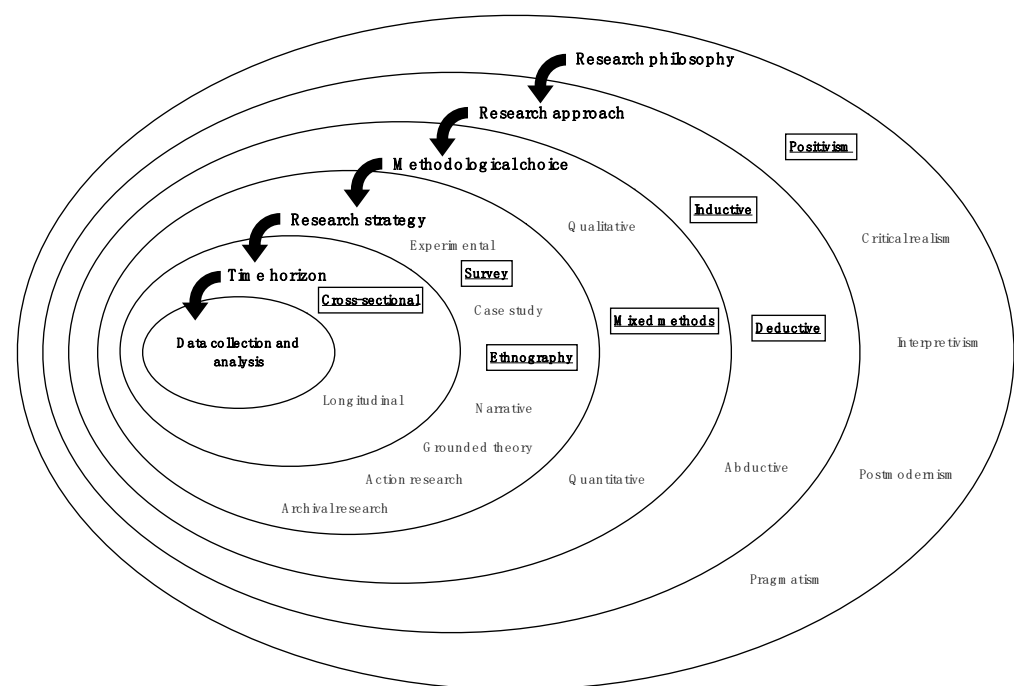


Figure 1. Research Onion. Source—Saunders et al. (2019).

The **Research Onion** serves as a guiding framework, ensuring that the study's methodological choices are logical, interconnected, and aligned with the research objectives. By following a structured progression—from philosophical stance to data collection—the framework strengthens the **validity, reliability, and generalizability** of findings related to Personal Branding and Personal Brand Equity.

By employing a **positivist, mixed-methods approach with a cross-sectional design**, this research contributes to the growing field of PB by offering a robust, **empirically**

validated model for measuring Personal Brand Equity, bridging theoretical gaps with practical applications.

3.2. Research Design, Philosophy, and Approach

The research is grounded in a **positivist philosophy**, which posits that knowledge is derived from observable and measurable phenomena. This is particularly appropriate for the development of a quantifiable model for Personal Branding, as the study aims to generate objective data through surveys and statistical analyses. In line with the positivist approach, the research adopts both **inductive and deductive reasoning**. The inductive phase involves collecting qualitative data to explore the constructs of Personal Branding, while the deductive phase tests these constructs through quantitative analysis, ultimately leading to the validation of the Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) (Gorbatov et al., 2018).

The research approach also integrates **cross-sectional** data collection, where data are gathered at a single point in time from a broad range of participants. This approach enables the study to capture a snapshot of how Personal Branding influences career outcomes across different professional contexts, such as employment and entrepreneurship.

The research design of the questionnaire (Ragab & Arisha, 2017; Szántó, 2025) is intended to gather data on the Personal Branding practices of participants, providing background information to better understand input variables, including how they develop and manage their personal brands and how they perceive the impact of their personal brands on their careers. The semi-structured interviews were conducted online and in-person with the scope to verify the identified constructs and variables from the literature review to not only provide better understanding but also as the foundation for the quantitative research. The questionnaire was administered online to a sample of working professionals. This mixed-methods approach allows for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, which can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research question.

The Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) will be used to assess the Personal Brand Equity of participants. It provides a measure of Personal Branding as proposed in this paper. The scale consists of six items that assess the perceived value, uniqueness, and distinctiveness of an individual's personal brand.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is widely used for brand equity measurement (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Simon & Sullivan, 1993; Gorbatov et al., 2020) and it simplifies the variables and identifies the ones with the largest effect. It helps in finding correlations between variables as well as creating a typology of types of entrepreneurs and organizations. The descriptive analysis of the variables characterizes the respondents. Based on other research, factor loadings lower than 0.50 are excluded and other calculations, like average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's α , AF criterion, KMO: Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin sample, and dimensionality are employed. The referred studies use a measurement model (outer model) with factor loading (FL), CI for bootstrap confidence interval—which should be 95% or higher—and commonality. Testing a structural model (inner model) will measure GoF, CI, p -values, Cronbach's α ; composite reliability (CR), dimensionality, AVE, maximum shared variance (MSV), and connections.

The factor correlation analysis provides insights into the relationships between the investigated variables and how they impact each other (Landrum & Garza, 2015; Ragab & Arisha, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). The table includes the 19 identified variables in the systematic literature review. The correlation table in the Results section shows the following: Pearson correlation coefficient, significance value, and the number of observations for each pair of variables.

Data Collection

Data collection was executed in two primary phases based on the prior systematic literature review: qualitative (semi-structured interviews in English) and quantitative (survey). The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification and categorization of recurring themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes informed the construction of the survey, which was subsequently administered to a larger sample to quantify the relationships between the identified variables. Statistical analyses, including regression and correlation tests, were applied to the survey data to validate the theoretical model developed from the qualitative findings.

This structured application of the Research Onion framework enabled a systematic, rigorous investigation of the constructs of Personal Branding and Personal Brand Equity. By meticulously following each layer of the onion, from philosophy through to data collection and analysis, this research provides validated insights that add significant value to the field of Personal Branding studies.

3.3. Systematic Literature Review

The first stage of the research involved conducting a **systematic literature review** to identify the key constructs and variables related to Personal Branding and Personal Brand Equity. Following the PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), a comprehensive search was conducted across multiple databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and EBSCO, using keywords such as “Personal Branding”, “personal brand”, “Personal Brand Equity”, and “career success” (Szántó, 2025). The systematic review aimed to consolidate existing knowledge and identify gaps in the literature that this study seeks to address.

A total of 493 articles were initially identified through keyword searches, with this number subsequently reduced to 82 after applying exclusion criteria such as relevance, peer-review status, and publication date (2005–2024). The selected articles provided a solid foundation for understanding the theoretical underpinnings of Personal Branding, its interdisciplinary nature, and the need for a standardized framework for measuring PBE (Szántó, 2025). Key constructs identified from the literature review included visibility, credibility, differentiation, online presence, and professional network, all of which were integrated into the study’s conceptual framework.

3.4. Qualitative Phase: Semi-Structured Interviews

The qualitative phase of the research employed **semi-structured interviews** to gain deeper insights into how individuals perceive and manage their personal brands. Ten professionals, including employees, managers, entrepreneurs, and freelancers, were interviewed. This diversity allowed for a comprehensive exploration of how Personal Branding manifests in different professional contexts (Szántó, 2025). The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided flexibility, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences while allowing the researcher to probe specific areas of interest related to the constructs identified in the literature review (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The interviews focused on key themes such as the following:

- The role of Personal Branding in career development;
- How individuals differentiate themselves in their professional networks;
- The impact of online presence and social media on Personal Brand Equity;
- The challenges and benefits of managing a personal brand in various industries.

The interview data were transcribed and coded using a thematic analysis approach, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns and themes. This qualitative phase was crucial for validating the relevance of the constructs identified in the literature, as well

as for uncovering new insights into how Personal Branding strategies are perceived and implemented across different professional fields.

3.5. Quantitative Phase: Survey, Sampling, and Data Collection

Building on the qualitative findings, a comprehensive quantitative survey was created to empirically test the validity of our proposed Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES). The research specifically aimed to validate whether the three-dimensional structure of Personal Brand Equity—comprising Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition (Gorbatov et al., 2018)—could effectively measure personal branding outcomes across diverse professional contexts, addressing the gap in standardized measurement tools identified in our literature review.

As shown in Table 1, the survey sample consisted of 396 professionals deliberately selected to represent the broad spectrum of working individuals for whom personal branding is relevant. The identified four distinct professional categories are employees (31.8%), managers (27.5%), entrepreneurs (26.5%), and freelancers (14.1%). This diversification was implemented to test the scale’s applicability across various career paths and professional contexts, moving beyond the limitations of previous studies that focused on specific demographic groups or occupations (Bendisch et al., 2013a; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017).

Table 1. Sample.

N	Age	Employment Status	Work Experience in Years	Gender (Males/Females)	Location	Highest Level of Education	Industry	Job Role
396	26.739	Junior Management	5.568	272:124	Hungary	University	IT, Information Services, Data Processing	Junior Management

Source—own work (2025).

The sample was selected to ensure diversity in terms of industry, job role, age, and gender, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings (Szántó, 2025). The survey was administered online, using both LinkedIn and professional networks to reach participants. To incentivize participation, respondents were offered personalized feedback on their personal brand based on the results of the PBES.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey were analyzed using **exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses** (EFA and CFA) to test the validity and reliability of the PBES. Factor analysis is particularly useful for identifying the underlying dimensions of complex constructs like Personal Branding (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In the exploratory phase, EFA was used to assess the dimensional structure of PBE, revealing how the identified variables clustered around the three core dimensions of Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition. Following this, CFA was employed to confirm the validity of the proposed model and ensure that it accurately reflected the data.

The reliability of the PBES was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, with a threshold of 0.7 indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). Additionally, **convergent and discriminant validity** were tested to ensure that the three dimensions of PBE were related to each other and also distinct from other constructs, such as general career success metrics like salary and job satisfaction.

To understand and validate the factor analyses, the methodology for compositing and grouping had to be aligned with both the findings of the literature review and the

collected data (Ragab & Arisha, 2017). The chosen appropriate indicator was Total Variance Explained (TVE), while the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test was used to measure sampling adequacy. To find high TVE value, first, the results were categorized in the following two groups: (1) based on the literature review, and (2) based on the results, which served as valuable insights for future practical applications.

As a prerequisite, a three-step methodology was applied prior to the causality analysis. The first step involved the removal of additional lower fits, retaining only those where there was at least a twofold difference statistically between the strongest and second-strongest fits. The next stage was crucial for validating the literature review and involved examining whether any of the new groupings resembled the prior groupings. The third step was to create the final, adequate grouping where the data were combined based on both the findings of the literature review and the statistical results. This third step involved selecting only the high values found in the grouping based on the literature, then these were compared to the highest values based on the statistical results while ensuring that the TVE reached at least 60%. Thus, these methods are both academically and statistically sound. These three steps were conducted on three levels: all the variables, the three brand dimensions, and the external- and self-Personal Brand Equity dimensions (ePBE and sPBE).

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Given the personal nature of the research, ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the research's purpose and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Szántó, 2025). The research adhered to the ethical guidelines set forth by Budapest Business School's Doctoral School of Entrepreneurship and Business.

3.8. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, several measures were implemented. **Triangulation** was employed by using both qualitative and quantitative data, which allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of Personal Branding and its impact on career success (Szántó, 2025). The combination of semi-structured interviews and structured surveys ensured robust and generalizable findings. Additionally, the survey was piloted with a small group of participants to refine the questions and ensure clarity before full distribution.

In terms of **research limitations**, the study acknowledges that cross-sectional data collection may not fully capture the longitudinal effects of Personal Branding on career success. Future research could address this by conducting longitudinal studies to explore how Personal Branding efforts evolve over time and how they impact long-term career trajectories.

4. Results

The results from both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research offer a comprehensive understanding of how Personal Branding influences career success. This section presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews with professionals across various industries, followed by the results of the quantitative analysis of survey data collected from 396 participants. Together, these results validate the proposed Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) and highlight the impact of Personal Branding on key career outcomes such as job satisfaction, salary potential, and career advancement.

4.1. Qualitative Results

Semi-structured interviews with 10 professionals—employees, managers, and entrepreneurs—explored how individuals perceive and manage their personal brands during the qualitative research phase. The interviews revealed **six key attributes** that consistently emerged as central to effective Personal Branding: visibility, credibility, differentiation, online presence, professional network, and reputation. These attributes and variables closely align with the dimensions of Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition, as outlined by [Gorbatov et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Aaker \(1997\)](#).

1. **Visibility:** Participants consistently highlighted the importance of being visible in their respective industries. Visibility was described as a key factor in maintaining relevance and ensuring that one's personal brand is recognized by both peers and potential employers. This supports [Keller's \(1993\)](#) assertion that brand knowledge plays a critical role in how a brand (or personal brand) is perceived by the target audience. Increased visibility was often linked to active engagement on social media platforms, public speaking, and participation in industry-specific events ([Szántó, 2025](#)). As one participant noted, "If you're not visible, you're not remembered, and if you're not remembered, you're not considered for opportunities".
2. **Credibility:** Credibility emerged as another pivotal attribute influencing Personal Branding. Interviewees emphasized that personal credibility—built through demonstrated expertise, reliability, and authenticity—greatly enhances one's personal brand appeal. This finding aligns with the notion of **Brand Appeal** in the PBE framework, where trustworthiness and authenticity are essential to building a strong, positive perception ([Gorbatov et al., 2020](#)). As another participant stated, "People need to trust that you know what you're doing. Without credibility, all the visibility in the world won't matter" ([Szántó, 2025](#)).
3. **Differentiation:** Differentiation was repeatedly mentioned as crucial for standing out in competitive job markets. Participants discussed the need to distinguish their personal brands by highlighting unique skills, experiences, or perspectives that set them apart from their peers. This finding supports [Aaker's \(1997\)](#) work on brand differentiation and reinforces the notion that individuals must carve out a distinct identity in order to be recognized and valued ([Szántó, 2025](#)). For example, one participant explained, "It's not just about being good at your job; it's about being different in a way that adds value to others".
4. **Online Presence:** The role of online presence, particularly through platforms like LinkedIn, X, TikTok and personal websites, was a recurring theme in the interviews. Participants acknowledged that cultivating a strong digital footprint is essential for enhancing visibility and credibility in today's digital age ([Khedher, 2014](#); [Rahayu et al., 2024](#); [Venciute et al., 2024](#); [Parameswari et al., 2023](#); [Nurbaiti et al., 2025](#)). The importance of **managing one's online reputation** and strategically curating content that aligns with one's professional goals was frequently mentioned. This finding is consistent with the literature on Personal Branding, which underscores the importance of online presence in shaping external perceptions of one's brand ([McCorkle & McCorkle, 2012](#)).
5. **Professional Network:** The interviews also revealed that a strong professional network is vital to successful Personal Branding. Participants noted that networking—both online and offline—provides opportunities to expand one's influence and enhance brand recognition ([Gorbatov et al., 2018](#); [Szántó, 2025](#)). As [Bourdieu's \(1986\)](#) theory of social capital suggests, individuals who build and maintain strong relationships are better positioned to leverage their personal brands for career advancement. One participant remarked, "Your network is your net worth. The stronger your con-

nections, the more valuable your personal brand becomes”. Further support for this statement can be found in [Salhab’s \(2024\)](#) article, which provides a relevant example of how social media platforms are utilized for personal branding and networking.

6. **Reputation:** Finally, reputation was identified as a key determinant (variable) of Personal Brand Equity. Participants stressed the importance of maintaining a positive reputation in their industries, as it builds trust and credibility. Reputation was described as a combination of personal and professional behaviors, past achievements, and consistent performance over time ([Zinko et al., 2007](#)). As one interviewee noted, “Your reputation precedes you, and it’s often what people remember long after you’ve left the room”.

These six attributes—visibility, credibility, differentiation, online presence, professional network, and reputation—were universally recognized as crucial components of effective Personal Branding. Together, they form the core of the **Brand Appeal**, **Brand Differentiation**, and **Brand Recognition** dimensions that underpin the PBES. The qualitative findings highlight the complexity of Personal Branding and confirm the relevance of the proposed dimensions in capturing its key elements.

The integrated research framework illustrated in Figure 2 serves as the conceptual foundation for our measurement approach to Personal Brand Equity (PBE). This framework visually represents how the three core dimensions of PBE—Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition—interact with the specific variables identified through our qualitative research. These interactions are systematically structured in Figure 2, where we present the Personal Brand Equity Scale and Brand–Dimension Matrix. This matrix operationalizes the conceptual framework by mapping each identified variable (such as Credibility, Impression Management, Status, etc.) to its corresponding brand dimension. The variables in the matrix were selected based on both their theoretical relevance within the framework and their statistical significance in our factor analyses. This structured approach ensures that our measurement of PBE comprehensively captures all three dimensions while maintaining construct validity across diverse professional contexts.

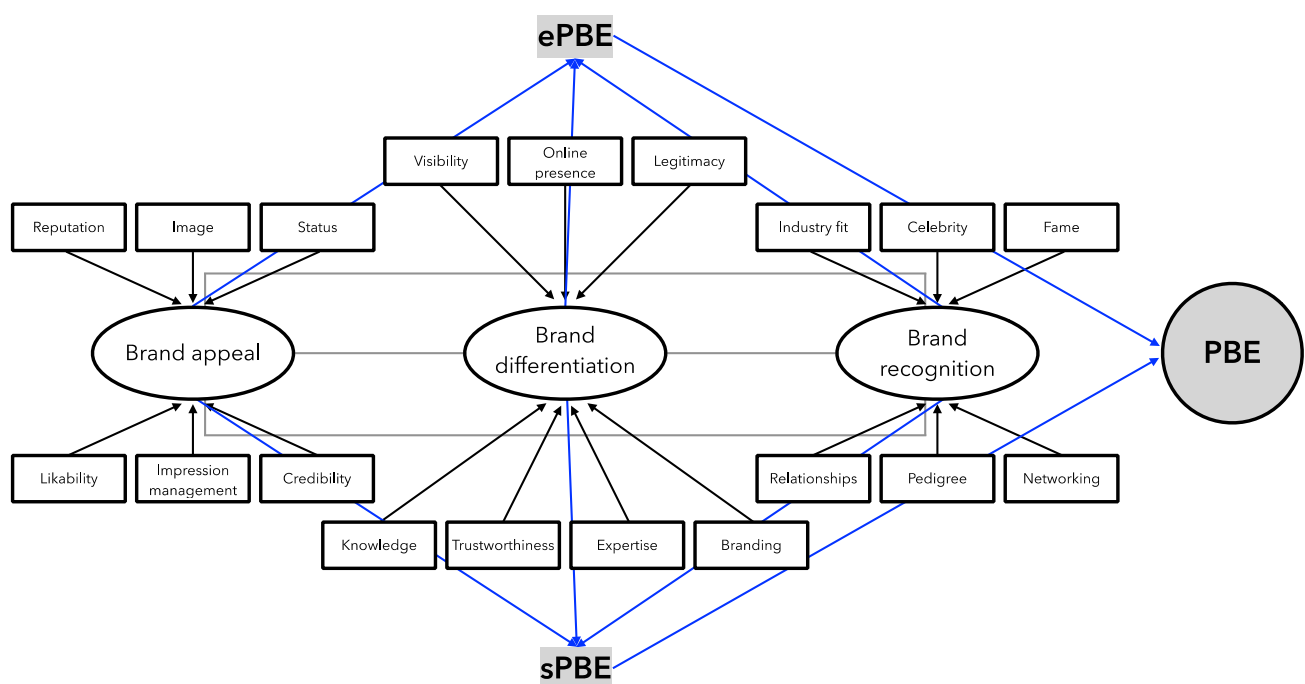


Figure 2. Integrated research framework of PBE, brand dimension, and variables. Source—own work (2025).

4.2. Quantitative Results

The quantitative phase of the research involved a survey of 396 professionals across various industries, designed to test the validity of the Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) and explore the relationship between Personal Branding efforts and career success. The survey included Likert scale questions to measure respondents' perceptions of their Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition, as well as career outcomes such as job satisfaction, salary progression, and career advancement opportunities (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Szántó, 2025).

Factor analysis was used to examine the structure of the PBES, the variables identified as factors and ensure that the three dimensions—Brand Appeal, Differentiation, and Recognition—were distinct yet interrelated dimensions that can be identified as constructs as well. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed that the items loaded strongly onto the three proposed factors, confirming the dimensionality of the PBES (Hair et al., 2014). The **Cronbach's alpha** values for each dimension were above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency and reliability for the scale (Szántó, 2025).

The survey results indicated a significant positive correlation between high scores on the PBES and **career success metrics**. Respondents who reported higher levels of Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition also reported greater job satisfaction, more frequent promotions, and higher salary potential. These findings align with the theoretical frameworks proposed by Gorbatov et al. (2020) and further validate the importance of Personal Branding in enhancing professional outcomes.

1. **Job Satisfaction:** Respondents who scored highly on the PBES were more likely to report higher job satisfaction. This supports the hypothesis that individuals with strong personal brands experience greater fulfillment in their careers, as their branding efforts often lead to more meaningful professional relationships and opportunities (Arthur et al., 2005). This finding also highlights the role of **Brand Appeal**, as individuals who are perceived as credible and trustworthy are more likely to enjoy positive professional experiences.
2. **Salary Progression:** The survey data revealed a significant relationship between Personal Branding efforts and salary progression. Respondents with high Brand Differentiation scores were more likely to report salary increases, suggesting that individuals who successfully differentiate themselves from their peers are rewarded with higher remuneration (Ng et al., 2005). This finding underscores the strategic importance of differentiation in Personal Branding and its impact on financial outcomes.
3. **Career Advancement:** Personal Branding was also found to be a strong predictor of career advancement opportunities. Respondents who scored highly on the PBES reported more frequent promotions and greater access to leadership roles. This supports the hypothesis that **Brand Recognition** plays a crucial role in career mobility (Gorbatov et al., 2020), as individuals who are well-known and respected within their industries are more likely to be considered for advancement.

The survey also included open-ended questions, which provided further insights into how respondents perceive the relationship between Personal Branding and career success. Many respondents noted that their Personal Branding efforts had directly led to new job offers, speaking engagements, and invitations to participate in high-profile projects. As one respondent explained, "My personal brand has become my most valuable asset. It's what differentiates me from others in my field and opens doors that wouldn't otherwise be available".

4.2.1. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis treats variables as constructs. As seen in Table 2, one of the most striking findings revealed by the analysis is the notably high positive correlation between the INDUSTRY FIT and RELATIONSHIP constructs, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.767$. This strong association suggests that an individual's fit within a given industry is closely intertwined with their ability to cultivate and nurture professional relationships within their network. In essence, the study underscores the pivotal role of fostering meaningful connections and leveraging them for professional growth and opportunities to fit in a chosen industry.

Conversely, the analysis unveils a strikingly low correlation between the FAME and RELATIONSHIP constructs, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = -0.663$. This negative correlation implies that while fame or public recognition may contribute to visibility, it does not necessarily equate to possessing substantive and meaningful professional relationships or networks in a particular domain. This finding underscores the nuanced nature of Personal Branding, suggesting that mere visibility or fame may not be sufficient for creating and maintaining relationships, especially within specialized fields where building a strong network reigns supreme. The lowest correlations were between impression management and fame ($r = -0.313$), trustworthiness and fame ($r = -0.320$), credibility and pedigree ($r = 0.334$), and industry fit and pedigree ($r = 0.335$). These correlations suggest that the factors involved are not strongly related and most likely have little impact on each other.

The correlation table below shows that all three brand dimension constructs are positively correlated with each other. The most important correlations are between BD and BA ($r = 0.781$, $p < 0.01$), while the correlation between BR and BA is $r = 0.647$ ($p < 0.01$), and for BD and BR is $r = 0.641$ ($p < 0.01$). Thus, the highest correlation observed in the analysis being between Brand Appeal (BA) and Brand Differentiation (BD), with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.781, suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between perceived Brand Appeal and the extent of Brand Differentiation. While the lowest correlation can still be considered robust, the coefficient between Brand Recognition (BR) and Brand Differentiation (BD) is 0.641, indicating that there is a slightly weaker relationship when compared, but still a notable positive association between these two constructs.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between ePBE and sPBE is found to be 0.852, indicating a strong positive correlation between these two constructs. This robust correlation suggests that individuals' self-perceptions of their Personal Brand Equity closely align with how others perceive their brand.

The results are aligned with the proposed model based on the literature review, indicating that there is a strong positive correlation between ePBE and sPBE, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.853. This implies that an individual's perception of their own personal brand (sPBE) is strongly related to external factors, especially to how others perceive them and their personal brand (ePBE). In other words, if an individual actively pursues building his or her personal brand, external factors will likely align; representing a strong reputation.

Table 2. Correlation analysis table.

		Correlations																			
		IMAGE	BRANDING	CREDIBILITY	FAME	IMPRESSION_MNG	INDUSTRY_FIT	KNOWLEDGE	LEGITIMACY	NETWORKING	PEDIGREE	RELATIONSHIP	REPUTATION	STATUS	TRUSTWORTHINESS	EXPERTISE	BA	BD	BR	ePBE	sPBE
IMAGE	Pearson Correlation		0.580	0.550	−0.449	0.560	0.513	0.465	0.458	0.469	0.431	0.526	0.750	0.574	0.531	0.517	0.849	0.661	0.594	0.814	0.714
BRANDING	Pearson Correlation	0.580		0.521	−0.396	0.508	0.485	0.518	0.571	0.564	0.509	0.512	0.589	0.527	0.576	0.486	0.674	0.810	0.578	0.694	0.787
CREDIBILITY	Pearson Correlation	0.550	0.521		−0.401	0.585	0.428	0.460	0.390	0.434	0.334	0.477	0.563	0.577	0.522	0.419	0.779	0.613	0.501	0.637	0.721
FAME	Pearson Correlation	−0.449	−0.396	−0.401		−0.313	−0.586	−0.354	−0.374	−0.427	−0.391	−0.663	−0.435	−0.429	−0.320	−0.335	−0.498	−0.442	−0.732	−0.702	−0.540
IMPRESSION_MNG	Pearson Correlation	0.560	0.508	0.585	−0.313		0.351	0.442	0.419	0.429	0.384	0.402	0.549	0.548	0.505	0.468	0.784	0.610	0.423	0.577	0.723
INDUSTRY_FIT	Pearson Correlation	0.513	0.485	0.428	−0.586	0.351		0.501	0.374	0.580	0.335	0.767	0.557	0.438	0.417	0.381	0.562	0.565	0.885	0.792	0.633
KNOWLEDGE	Pearson Correlation	0.465	0.518	0.460	−0.354	0.442	0.501		0.378	0.577	0.340	0.466	0.488	0.448	0.551	0.500	0.573	0.766	0.536	0.606	0.739
LEGITIMACY	Pearson Correlation	0.458	0.571	0.390	−0.374	0.419	0.374	0.378		0.347	0.557	0.341	0.468	0.522	0.443	0.386	0.543	0.620	0.413	0.609	0.570
NETWORKING	Pearson Correlation	0.469	0.564	0.434	−0.427	0.429	0.580	0.577	0.347		0.345	0.657	0.497	0.458	0.486	0.452	0.572	0.680	0.712	0.649	0.751
PEDIGREE	Pearson Correlation	0.431	0.509	0.334	−0.391	0.384	0.335	0.340	0.557	0.345		0.338	0.402	0.449	0.401	0.365	0.488	0.525	0.452	0.523	0.590
RELATIONSHIP	Pearson Correlation	0.526	0.512	0.477	−0.663	0.402	0.767	0.466	0.341	0.657	0.338		0.546	0.452	0.412	0.358	0.584	0.552	0.933	0.769	0.683
REPUTATION	Pearson Correlation	0.750	0.589	0.563	−0.435	0.549	0.557	0.488	0.468	0.497	0.402	0.546		0.616	0.507	0.466	0.851	0.656	0.603	0.822	0.703
STATUS	Pearson Correlation	0.574	0.527	0.577	−0.429	0.548	0.438	0.448	0.522	0.458	0.449	0.452	0.616		0.475	0.407	0.804	0.600	0.507	0.727	0.656
TRUSTWORTHINESS	Pearson Correlation	0.531	0.576	0.522	−0.320	0.505	0.417	0.551	0.443	0.486	0.401	0.412	0.507	0.475		0.657	0.638	0.852	0.469	0.597	0.792
EXPERTISE	Pearson Correlation	0.517	0.486	0.419	−0.335	0.468	0.381	0.500	0.386	0.452	0.365	0.358	0.466	0.407	0.657		0.574	0.775	0.443	0.570	0.729
BA	Pearson Correlation	0.849	0.674	0.779	−0.498	0.784	0.562	0.573	0.543	0.572	0.488	0.584	0.851	0.804	0.638	0.574		0.781	0.647	0.879	0.874

Table 2. Cont.

		Correlations																			
		IMAGE	BRANDING	CREDIBILITY	FAME	IMPRESSION_MNG	INDUSTRY_FIT	KNOWLEDGE	LEGITIMACY	NETWORKING	PEDIGREE	RELATIONSHIP	REPUTATION	STATUS	TRUSTWORTHINESS	EXPERTISE	BA	BD	BR	ePBE	sPBE
BD	Pearson Correlation	0.661	0.810	0.613	−0.442	0.610	0.565	0.766	0.620	0.680	0.525	0.552	0.656	0.600	0.852	0.775	0.781		0.641	0.793	0.946
BR	Pearson Correlation	0.594	0.578	0.501	−0.732	0.423	0.885	0.536	0.413	0.712	0.452	0.933	0.603	0.507	0.469	0.443	0.647	0.641		0.878	0.753
ePBE	Pearson Correlation	0.814	0.694	0.637	−0.702	0.577	0.792	0.606	0.609	0.649	0.523	0.769	0.822	0.727	0.597	0.570	0.879	0.793	0.878		0.852
sPBE	Pearson Correlation	0.714	0.787	0.721	−0.540	0.723	0.633	0.739	0.570	0.751	0.590	0.683	0.703	0.656	0.792	0.729	0.874	0.946	0.753	0.852	

Source—own work (2025).

4.2.2. Factor Analysis

The factor analysis results demonstrate strong statistical validation for the three dimensions of Personal Brand Equity: Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition.

Brand Appeal showed robust factor loadings across key variables with Credibility_2 (0.813), Impression_management_2 (0.803), Status_2 (0.801), Image_2 (0.753), and Reputation_1 (0.713) demonstrating particularly strong correlations. This suggests these variables collectively represent a single underlying factor. The analysis yielded strong statistical validation with TVE of 60.425%, a KMO value of 0.806, and a significant Bartlett's test result ($p < 0.001$).

For Brand Differentiation, the highest factor loadings were observed for Branding (0.836), Legitimacy (0.824), and Expertise (0.777), with Trustworthiness showing a moderate loading (0.664). These findings indicate that branding strategies, perceived legitimacy, and expertise are critical components of personal brand differentiation. Statistical metrics confirmed the robustness of these relationships with TVE of 60.557%, a KMO value of 0.764, and significant Bartlett's test results ($p < 0.001$).

Brand Recognition demonstrated the highest overall factor loadings, with Relationships (0.876), Industry_fit (0.858), Fame (0.844), Relationships_2 (0.814), Celebrity (0.778), Networking_2 (0.755), and Industry_fit_2 (0.726) all showing strong correlations. These results highlight the multidimensional nature of Brand Recognition, encompassing both professional relationships and public perception. Statistical validation was particularly strong, with TVE of 65.463%, a KMO value of 0.880, and significant Bartlett's test results ($p < 0.001$).

The factor analysis also examined the 15 key variables contributing to Personal Brand Equity (PBE) to identify underlying patterns and relationships. Statistical validation metrics confirmed the appropriateness of the analysis, with all variables showing significant Bartlett's test results ($p < 0.001$), indicating robust correlations among variables.

As seen in Tables 3 and 4, while individual KMO values ranged from 0.500 to 0.624 (with Trustworthiness showing the highest interrelatedness), the overall analysis demonstrated strong explanatory power. The Total Variance Explained (TVE) values ranged from 51.781% to 79.990%, with an average of 66.125%, indicating that the extracted factors accounted for a substantial portion of the variance in the dataset.

Table 3. Brand Appeal factor analysis.

	BA
Credibility_2	0.813
Impression_management_2	0.803
Status_2	0.801
Image_2	0.753
Reputation_1	0.713
TVE	60.425
KMO	0.806
Batlett p	0.000

Source—own work (2025).

The analysis revealed particularly strong factor loadings for several variables:

- Relationships (0.894) and Industry Fit (0.892) emerged as the most influential factors.
- Image (0.860), Branding (0.859), and Trustworthiness (0.848) also demonstrated robust loadings.

- Reputation (0.846), Impression Management (0.835), and Status (0.833) showed significant influence.

The Status variable displayed interesting internal variance, with its first two measurements showing strong positive loadings (0.833 and 0.782) while the third showed a negative loading (−0.498), suggesting potential heterogeneity within this construct. Similar patterns were observed with the Fame, Pedigree, and Legitimacy variables, though these were attributed to intentional reverse questioning in the survey design.

Table 4. Brand Differentiation Factor Analysis.

	BD
Branding_1	0.836
Legitimacy_1	0.824
Expertise_1	0.777
Trustworthiness_2	0.664
TVE	60.557
KMO	0.764
Batlett <i>p</i>	0.000

Source—own work (2025).

These findings underscore the multidimensional nature of Personal Brand Equity, highlighting the particular importance of relationship building, industry alignment, and image management in developing a strong personal brand.

The study employed Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)—which can be seen in Table 5—to identify underlying structures within Personal Branding attributes and Personal Brand Equity (PBE). This method helped determine the dimensionality of Personal Branding constructs and their alignment with the theoretical frameworks of Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition.

Table 5. Variables factor analysis.

Name	KMO	TVE	Bartlett <i>p</i>	Measured Variables Factor Loading		
				Variable_1	Variable_2	Variable_3
Image	0.500	74.032	0.000	0.860	0.860	
Branding	0.500	73.847	0.000	0.859	0.859	
Credibility	0.500	65.516	0.000	0.809	0.809	
Fame	0.500	62.372	0.000	−0.790	0.790	
Impression_mng	0.500	69.697	0.000	0.835	0.835	
Industry_fit	0.500	79.567	0.000	0.892	0.892	
Knowledge	0.500	65.376	0.000	0.809	0.809	
Legitimacy	0.500	54.219	0.000	0.736	−0.736	
Networking	0.500	62.215	0.000	0.789	0.789	
Pedigree	0.500	56.625	0.000	0.752	−0.752	
Relationship	0.500	79.990	0.000	0.894	0.894	
Reputation	0.500	71.571	0.000	0.846	0.846	
Status	0.538	51.781	0.000	0.833	0.782	−0.498
trustworthiness	0.624	61.220	0.000	0.848	0.783	0.711
expertise	0.500	63.853	0.000	0.799	0.799	

Source—own work (2025).

The analysis revealed two distinct factors: external-Personal Brand Equity (ePBE) and self-Personal Brand Equity (sPBE). Both demonstrated strong statistical validity:

- Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) values were robust at 0.833 (ePBE) and 0.807 (sPBE), well above the 0.5 threshold.
- Bartlett’s test results were significant ($p < 0.001$) for both factors.
- Total Variance Explained (TVE) was substantial at 62.970% (ePBE) and 62.999% (sPBE).

The strongest factors can be seen in Table 6. Notably, Fame showed a significant negative loading (-0.715) with sPBE, suggesting it may potentially diminish personal branding effectiveness in self-perception contexts.

Table 6. ePBE and sPBE factor analysis.

	ePBE
TRUSTWORTHINESS	0.829
BRANDING	0.793
KNOWLEDGE	0.793
EXPERTISE	0.780
NETWORKING	0.772
TVE	62.970
KMO	0.833
Bartlett p	0.000
	sPBE
REPUTATION	0.860
IMAGE	0.840
INDUSTRY_FIT	0.775
STATUS	0.771
FAME	-0.715
TVE	62.999
KMO	0.807
Bartlett p	0.000

Source—own work (2025).

As was previously discussed, the research presents a comprehensive examination of Personal Branding (PB) and Personal Brand Equity (PBE) measurement, proposing a standardized framework through mixed-methods research combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys with 396 professionals across various industries. The study validates a three-dimensional structure of PBE—comprising Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition—through robust factor analysis, demonstrating strong statistical validity with significant Bartlett’s test results and substantial Total Variance Explained values ranging from 51–80%. The analysis further identifies two distinct components: external-Personal Brand Equity (ePBE), most strongly associated with Trustworthiness (0.829), Branding (0.793), and Knowledge (0.793); and self-Personal Brand Equity (sPBE), primarily correlated with Reputation (0.860) and Image (0.840). This offers both theoretical contributions to understanding Personal Branding as a multidimensional construct and practical applications for professionals seeking to enhance their personal brands for career advancement.

4.3. The Role of Online Presence in Personal Branding

The quantitative results also underscored the growing importance of online presence in shaping Personal Brand Equity. Respondents with active and well-maintained online profiles—particularly on platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter—reported significantly higher scores on the PBES. This finding aligns with previous research on the role of digital platforms in shaping personal brands (Labrecque et al., 2011) and highlights the need for professionals to strategically manage their online identities (Szántó, 2025).

5. Discussion

The findings from this study confirm that **Personal Branding (PB)** is a crucial factor in professional development and success. The proposed **Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES)** provides a standardized tool for individuals to measure and improve their Personal Brand Equity (PBE). This research highlights the significance of personal branding for career advancement and its benefits for organizations that encourage employees to develop and manage their personal brands. (Shepherd, 2005; Gorbatov et al., 2018).

The convergence of our qualitative and quantitative findings offers compelling evidence for the three-dimensional structure of Personal Brand Equity. Through qualitative interviews, participants consistently emphasized the importance of credibility, expertise, and industry reputation—themes that directly corresponded with the three empirically validated dimensions identified in our factor analyses: Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition. This methodological triangulation strengthens the validity of our proposed Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) while enriching our understanding of how these dimensions are experienced in professional contexts. For instance, the high factor loading of Credibility_2 (0.813) in the Brand Appeal dimension quantitatively validates the qualitative emphasis participants placed on authenticity in building effective personal brands, echoing Fombrun and Van Riel's (2004) assertion that credibility is fundamental to favorable brand perception.

5.1. The Importance of Personal Branding in Professional Development

The results of this study underscore that Personal Branding significantly shapes professional identities and career trajectories. As indicated by the qualitative findings, attributes such as **visibility, credibility, and differentiation** were consistently recognized by participants as essential components of effective Personal Branding (Aaker, 1997; Szántó, 2025). These attributes enhance an individual's marketability and strengthen their professional presence in competitive environments.

It is important to highlight how modern trends serve as factors, such as sustainability. In analyzing personal branding strategies, Almestarihi (2024) explored how eco-friendly branding can be used to discuss how individuals incorporate sustainability into their personal brands, reflecting broader trends in branding practices.

The qualitative data revealed that visibility in the workplace is a prerequisite for professional success. Individuals actively engaged in networking and self-promotion are more likely to be recognized for their contributions. This aligns with Vallas and Cummins (2015), who argue that in contemporary career management, personal brands must be strategically curated to maintain relevance and visibility. The growing influence of social media further amplifies the importance of visibility, as individuals can reach wider audiences and establish their personal brands more effectively through digital platforms (Khedher, 2014).

Additionally, the correlation between high PBES scores and positive career outcomes demonstrates the tangible benefits of effective Personal Branding. Individuals with strong Personal Brands reported higher job satisfaction and salary potential, supporting

Ng et al. (2005) and Arthur et al. (2005), who posited that Personal Branding significantly influences perceived career success. This finding reinforces the notion that professionals should proactively manage their brands to enhance their career trajectories (Szántó, 2025).

5.2. Integrating External- vs. Self-Personal Brand Equity and Brand Dimensions

The research reveals a particularly notable finding in the distinction between external-Personal Brand Equity (ePBE) and self-Personal Brand Equity (sPBE)—a dichotomy that emerged organically in our qualitative interviews and was subsequently validated through exploratory factor analysis. Interview participants frequently differentiated between how they perceived their own personal brand versus how others perceived it, noting tensions and occasional disconnects between these perceptions. The quantitative validation of this distinction through factor analysis (KMO values of 0.833 for ePBE and 0.807 for sPBE) provides statistical confirmation of what qualitative participants intuitively described. This finding extends Zinko et al.'s (2007) work on reputation by demonstrating that Personal Brand Equity encompasses both self-perception and external evaluation components, with different variables loading predominantly on each factor, as theorized by Gorbatov et al. (2018) but not previously validated empirically.

The comparison table (Table 7) systematically juxtaposes the qualitative and quantitative findings across the three dimensions of Personal Brand Equity, demonstrating how these complementary methodologies validate and enrich each other. By aligning interview insights with statistical factor loadings for each dimension (Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition), the table reveals striking consistencies between participants' subjective experiences and empirical measurements. For example, the qualitative emphasis on credibility and impression management is statistically validated through high factor loadings (0.813 and 0.803, respectively) in the Brand Appeal dimension. The table further strengthens the discussion section by connecting these integrated findings to established theoretical frameworks like Aaker's (1997) brand personality concept, while offering practical implications for professionals seeking to enhance their personal brands. This structured comparison provides a powerful visual representation of methodological triangulation that substantiates the three-dimensional model of Personal Brand Equity.

Table 7. Comparison table of qualitative and quantitative findings on personal brand equity dimensions in Relation to the literature.

PBE Dimension	Key Qualitative Findings	Supporting Quantitative Results	Theoretical Alignment	Practical Implications
Brand Appeal	Interview participants emphasized credibility, status, and impression management as crucial for professional reputation	Factor analysis showed strong loadings for Credibility_2 (0.813), Impression_management_2 (0.803), and Status_2 (0.801)	Aligns with Aaker's (1997) emphasis on attributes and attitudes as core components of brand appeal	Professionals should prioritize authentic self-presentation that builds credibility across contexts
Brand Differentiation	Interviewees highlighted expertise and unique professional positioning as key differentiators	Strong factor loadings for Branding (0.836), Legitimacy (0.824), and Expertise (0.777)	Supports Evans' (2017) and Parmentier et al.'s (2013) findings on differentiation in professional fields	Organizations and individuals should identify and communicate unique expertise rather than generic professional qualities

Table 7. Cont.

PBE Dimension	Key Qualitative Findings	Supporting Quantitative Results	Theoretical Alignment	Practical Implications
Brand Recognition	Qualitative data revealed the importance of network relationships and industry fit for visibility	Highest factor loadings observed for Relationships (0.876), Industry_fit (0.858), and Fame (0.844)	Extends Hochwarter et al.'s (2007) work on reputation effects on performance ratings	Strategic networking within specific industry contexts offers more impact than general visibility efforts
ePBE vs. sPBE	Interviews revealed tension between self-perception and external perception of personal brands	Statistical validation through EFA with distinct factor loadings for external factors (Trustworthiness, 0.829) vs. self factors (Reputation, 0.860)	Builds upon Zinko et al.'s (2007) definition of reputation while incorporating Gorbatov et al.'s (2018) theoretical framework	Personal branding strategies should address both how professionals see themselves and how others perceive them

Source: own work (2025).

The empirical validation of Brand Appeal as a dimension of Personal Brand Equity, with particularly strong loadings for credibility and impression management factors, aligns with [Aaker's \(1997\)](#) conceptualization of brand personality and [Pagis and Ailon's \(2017\)](#) emphasis on audience-oriented self-presentation. Similarly, our findings on Brand Differentiation support [Keller's \(1993\)](#) original framework while extending it through the specific loading patterns of expertise and legitimacy variables, concepts earlier explored by [Parmentier et al. \(2013\)](#) in their study of professional differentiation. These connections between our empirical findings and established theoretical frameworks strengthen the academic foundation of our proposed Personal Brand Equity Scale.

5.3. Implications of the Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES)

The PBES serves as a valuable tool for both individuals and organizations, offering a standardized approach to measuring Personal Branding efforts. Based on the literature review and the empirical test, to build one's personal brand and its equity to support professional advancement, individuals can follow these steps:

1. **Define their personal brand clearly:** Identify their distinct value proposition, core strengths, and areas of expertise ([Aaker, 1991](#); [Keller, 1993](#); [Keller & Lehmann, 2006](#); [Lassar et al., 1995](#); [Khedher, 2014](#)).
2. **Consistently communicate their brand:** Utilize social media, networking events, and other channels to promote their brand and establish a professional network ([Harris & Rae, 2011](#); [Wolff & Moser, 2009](#)).
3. **Showcase their expertise:** Share knowledge and experience by writing articles, delivering presentations, or participating in industry events ([Zinko & Rubin, 2015](#)).
4. **Solicit feedback:** Seek input from colleagues, mentors, and industry experts to refine their personal brand and enhance career progression ([Goffman, 1956](#); [Gorbatov et al., 2018](#)).

To analyze the data, the variables were structured into a matrix—as seen in Table 8—using the newly introduced Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) alongside [Gorbatov et al.'s \(2020\)](#) three-dimensional model, which includes brand appeal, brand differentiation, and brand recognition. The matrix also incorporates the variables as follows: self-presentation constructs identified by [Goffman \(1956\)](#) and [Zinko and Rubin \(2015\)](#), featuring key constructs such as reputation, status, image, fame, celebrity, pedigree, legitimacy, credibility, branding, and impression management ([Goffman, 1956](#); [Tajfel & Turner, 1986](#)). Based on these findings, the matrix of variables can be represented as follows:

Table 8. Personal Brand Equity Scale and Brand-Dimension Matrix.

PBES Item/Brand Scale	Brand Appeal	Brand Differentiation	Brand Recognition
"I am known for my unique skills and abilities".	Reputation	Knowledge	Industry Fit
"I am perceived as being valuable to my organization".	Image	Trustworthiness	Relationships
"I am recognized as being different from others in my field".	Likability	Expertise	Pedigree
"I have a strong personal brand".	Status	Branding	Celebrity
"I am well-known within my industry".	Impression Management	Online Presence Visibility	Fame
"I am perceived as being a leader in my field".	Credibility	Legitimacy	Networking

Source—own work (2025).

Based on the findings of the categorization presented, the following dependent and independent variables were identified: Independent variables may include actions such as promoting oneself through consistent communication, clarifying and emphasizing unique selling points, maintaining authenticity and transparency, participating in conferences and networking events, engaging in public speaking or guest writing, and utilizing social media for brand promotion. The dependent variables may encompass building authentic relationships with clients, the number of clients acquired through personal branding initiatives, and the retention of long-term clients along with referrals.

To simplify using the established coding, the independent variable can be seen as the outcome of applying Personal Branding strategies, encapsulated by Personal Brand Equity (PBE), such as self-promotion, authenticity and transparency, enhancing visibility and credibility, and clarifying unique selling points. The dependent variables could be measured by the number of secured clients, referrals, testimonials, and overall reputation as assessed through online research and feedback surveys from others.

By evaluating Personal Branding across the dimensions of **Brand Appeal**, **Brand Differentiation**, and **Brand Recognition**, individuals can gain insights into their branding strategies and identify areas for improvement. This structured measurement aligns with the interdisciplinary approaches discussed by [Gorbatov et al. \(2018\)](#) and reflects the complex nature of Personal Branding.

Brand Appeal, which assesses the attractiveness of an individual's brand, has been shown to correlate with positive workplace relationships and enhanced performance evaluations ([Szántó, 2025](#)). This dimension is particularly relevant in today's job market, where personal and professional networks are increasingly intertwined. Individuals who actively cultivate their Brand Appeal can create stronger connections with colleagues and superiors, facilitating career advancement and greater job satisfaction.

Brand Differentiation emerges as a vital factor for professionals seeking to distinguish themselves from their peers. Participants in this study emphasized the necessity of showcasing unique skills and experiences, aligning with [Aaker's \(1997\)](#) work on brand differentiation in marketing. In an environment where many professionals possess similar qualifications, the ability to effectively communicate one's unique value proposition becomes essential for success. This finding is particularly significant as it suggests that professionals must not only be competent in their roles but also skilled in articulating their distinctiveness to gain recognition and opportunity ([Szántó, 2025](#)).

Brand Recognition is another critical dimension of the PBES, as it reflects how well an individual's brand is known and respected within their industry. High Brand Recognition

often translates into increased professional opportunities, as well-recognized individuals are more likely to be considered for promotions and leadership roles. This is consistent with Keller's (1993) assertion that strong brands enjoy higher levels of consumer awareness and loyalty. In a professional context, this suggests that individuals who successfully build their Brand Recognition are more likely to experience favorable outcomes, such as job offers and career advancements.

5.4. Organizational Benefits of Promoting Personal Branding

The implications of this research extend beyond individual professionals; organizations can significantly benefit from fostering an environment that encourages Personal Branding among their employees. By promoting Personal Branding initiatives, organizations can enhance employee engagement, productivity, and retention (Gorbatov et al., 2020; Szántó, 2025). Employees empowered to develop personal brands exhibit increased job satisfaction, positively impacting organizational performance.

Aaker (1997) highlighted the importance of brand equity at the organizational level, suggesting that strong brands lead to better financial performance and competitive advantages. Findings revealed that organizations which invest in their employees' Personal Branding enhance individual performance and contribute to overall brand equity. This can be particularly crucial in industries where talent retention and attraction are highly competitive.

Furthermore, encouraging employees to engage in Personal Branding can create a culture of accountability and ownership over one's career. As individuals take the initiative to manage their brands, they are likely to develop a stronger sense of purpose and commitment to their work, leading to higher levels of engagement and productivity (Arthur et al., 2005). Organizations that support and recognize the importance of Personal Branding may also find that their employees are more willing to share knowledge, collaborate, and contribute to the company's goals (Szántó, 2025).

6. Future Research Directions and Limitations

6.1. Limitations of the Current Study

While this research provides valuable insights into Personal Branding and Personal Brand Equity, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study employed a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time, which restricts our understanding of how Personal Brand Equity develops and evolves throughout professional lifecycles. This temporal limitation prevents causal inferences about the long-term impact of specific Personal Branding strategies on career outcomes (Arthur et al., 2017).

The sample composition presents another limitation. Although the study included diverse professional categories (employees 31.8%, managers 27.5%, entrepreneurs 26.5%, and freelancers 14.1%), certain industries and professional contexts may be underrepresented. Additionally, the research relied primarily on self-reported data, which introduces potential social desirability bias, especially when participants assessed their own Personal Branding effectiveness (Gorbatov et al., 2018).

The quantitative analysis revealed distinct constructs of external-Personal Brand Equity (ePBE) and self-Personal Brand Equity (sPBE), but the relationship between these constructs requires further investigation. The negative loading of Fame (-0.715) with sPBE suggests complex dynamics that this study could not fully explore (Szántó, 2025). Furthermore, while the Personal Brand Equity Scale demonstrated strong statistical validity, as a newly developed instrument it requires additional validation across diverse contexts.

6.2. Future Research Directions

6.2.1. Longitudinal Research on Personal Brand Development

Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies examining how Personal Branding evolves over time. Such studies would provide valuable insights into the developmental trajectory of personal brands, illuminating how specific branding strategies impact career advancement and professional growth across different career stages ([Arthur et al., 2005](#); [Szántó, 2025](#)). Longitudinal research could also investigate how personal brands adapt to changing professional environments, technological developments, and market conditions, offering a more dynamic understanding of Personal Branding as a process rather than a static outcome.

6.2.2. Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Personal Branding

Cultural context significantly influences Personal Branding practices and perceptions. Future research should explore how cultural dimensions affect Personal Branding strategies and outcomes across different regions and cultural frameworks ([Vallas & Cummins, 2015](#)). This cross-cultural perspective would enhance the understanding of which Personal Branding attributes are universally valued versus culturally specific, potentially leading to more culturally sensitive adaptations of the Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES).

6.2.3. Industry-Specific Applications and Adaptations

While this study established the general applicability of the PBES, industry-specific research could identify how Personal Branding requirements and outcomes vary across different professional contexts. Comparative studies across industries such as technology, healthcare, creative fields, and traditional corporate environments would reveal how industry norms and expectations shape Personal Branding practices ([Parmentier et al., 2013](#)). Such research could lead to industry-specific adaptations of the PBES, enhancing its relevance and utility for professionals in diverse fields.

6.2.4. Exploring the Digital Dimensions of Personal Branding

The digital landscape continues to transform how professionals develop and communicate their personal brands. Future research should specifically investigate how digital platforms and social media influence Personal Brand Equity development ([Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017](#)). Studies could examine how online presence correlates with career advancement, the relative impact of different digital platforms on brand perception, and strategies for effective digital Personal Branding. The growing importance of digital identity management suggests this area will be particularly fruitful for future research.

6.2.5. Intersection with Other Theoretical Constructs

Future research could also investigate the intersection of Personal Branding with other constructs and variables, such as emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and cultural differences in branding practices ([Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004](#)). Understanding how these factors interact with Personal Branding can help refine the PBES and enhance its applicability across diverse contexts. This integration would provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework for Personal Branding and potentially reveal synergistic effects between Personal Branding and other professional development domains.

6.2.6. Relationship Between ePBE and sPBE

This study identified external-Personal Brand Equity (ePBE) and self-Personal Brand Equity (sPBE) as distinct but related dimensions. Future research should further investigate the relationship between these constructs, examining how alignment or misalignment between self-perception and external perception affects career outcomes

(Zinko & Rubin, 2015; Szántó, 2025). Longitudinal studies could reveal whether ePBE precedes sPBE or vice versa, providing insights into the causal mechanisms of Personal Brand Equity development.

6.2.7. Personal Branding for Underrepresented Groups

Qualitative studies focusing on underrepresented groups in the literature, such as freelancers, gig economy workers, or professionals in creative industries, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of Personal Branding dynamics (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Szántó, 2025). Research examining how Personal Branding strategies and outcomes differ across demographic dimensions such as gender, age, and ethnicity would address significant gaps in the current literature and potentially identify unique challenges and opportunities faced by diverse professionals.

6.2.8. Organizational Integration of Personal Branding

The tension between organizational branding and Personal Branding presents an important area for future research. Studies could investigate how organizations can effectively integrate employees' personal brands with corporate identity, potentially identifying best practices for resolving conflicts and leveraging synergies between individual and organizational branding (Bendisch et al., 2013a). This research direction has significant implications for talent management, employer branding, and organizational culture.

6.2.9. Broader Validation and Testing of the PBES

Emphasizing the introduction of this new model calls for its validation and testing across various industries, age groups, and demographic segments. By applying the PBES framework broadly, researchers can assess its robustness, adaptability, and effectiveness in diverse settings, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of personal branding's role and impact within different professional landscapes (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1997). This broader application will not only solidify the model's relevance but also offer valuable insights into how personal branding practices can be optimized for different markets and cultures.

In conclusion, this study reinforces the critical importance of Personal Branding as a vital component of professional development. The proposed Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) offers a standardized tool for individuals to assess and enhance their Personal Branding efforts. As professionals continue to navigate increasingly competitive job markets, the ability to effectively manage and promote their personal brands will remain essential for achieving career success. Future research addressing these directions will further illuminate how individuals can effectively develop and leverage their personal brands for career advancement and organizational success.

7. Conclusions

This paper provides organizations and professionals with practical frameworks for leveraging Personal Brand Equity (PBE) as a strategic asset in contemporary business environments. The Personal Brand Equity Scale (PBES) transcends theoretical contributions by offering actionable measurement tools that enable both individuals and organizations to quantify and systematically enhance personal branding efforts (Arthur et al., 2017; Gorbatov et al., 2018).

Our empirical validation of the three-dimensional structure of PBE—comprising Brand Appeal, Brand Differentiation, and Brand Recognition—delivers practical guidance for professionals seeking competitive advantages in increasingly crowded marketplaces. Organizations can implement this framework to develop targeted professional development programs that strengthen employees' personal brands along these specific dimensions,

thereby enhancing both individual career trajectories and organizational performance (Zinko & Rubin, 2015; Parmentier et al., 2013).

The discovered distinction between external-Personal Brand Equity (ePBE) and self-Personal Brand Equity (sPBE) offers particularly valuable insights for organizational talent development strategies. Our findings reveal that ePBE is most strongly associated with Trustworthiness (0.829), Branding (0.793), and Knowledge (0.793), while sPBE correlates primarily with Reputation (0.860) and Image (0.840). Organizations can leverage this understanding to design differentiated development pathways that address both external perception and self-perception dimensions of employee branding (Bendisch et al., 2013a; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004).

For human resource practitioners, our research provides evidence-based frameworks for integrating Personal Branding considerations into recruitment, talent development, and leadership succession planning. The quantifiable nature of the PBES enables organizations to incorporate Personal Brand Equity metrics into performance evaluation systems, creating explicit pathways for employees to enhance their value to both themselves and their organizations (Vallas & Cummins, 2015). This approach aligns with Szántó and Radácsi's (2023) model of presenting ourselves to specific target audiences while remaining aware of competition.

The practical value of our findings extends to entrepreneurial contexts, where Personal Branding increasingly functions as a critical differentiator in securing funding, attracting clients, and building business partnerships. Entrepreneurs can apply the PBES framework to strategically enhance their personal brands in ways that directly contribute to business development outcomes and stakeholder trust (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017; Lobpries et al., 2018).

Digital transformation continues to reshape Personal Branding practices across industries. Our research reveals significant correlations between online presence variables and overall PBE, providing practical guidance for professionals navigating increasingly digital professional environments. Organizations should develop comprehensive digital Personal Branding strategies that enable employees to leverage online platforms while maintaining alignment with organizational values and objectives (Khedher, 2014; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017).

As digitalization accelerates and career paths become increasingly non-linear, the practical frameworks developed in this research offer valuable navigation tools for both individuals and organizations. By implementing the Personal Brand Equity Scale and recognizing the multidimensional nature of Personal Branding, organizations can create cultures that simultaneously empower individual brand development while strengthening collective organizational identity, ultimately enhancing both employee engagement and market positioning (Arthur et al., 2017; Hochwarter et al., 2007).

The Personal Brand Equity framework presented here transforms Personal Branding from an abstract concept into a measurable, developable professional competency that delivers tangible value in contemporary business environments. As organizations continue to navigate increasingly complex talent marketplaces, strategic investment in Personal Brand Equity development represents a powerful approach to enhancing both individual and organizational outcomes.

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